

## COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NON-PROFIT VR SERVICE PROVIDERS

**The AZRSA relates with Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) non-profit providers in three major ways:**

Partners in the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities.

Partners in building and maintaining a network of services and programs critical to the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities including the establishment, development, and improvement of community programs and services.

Contractors with AZRSA.

### Partnership Building

The AZRSA is reviewing and enhancing its relationship with local Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) providers as valued partners. AZRSA administration has initiated meetings between state level staff, local community providers, and local AZRSA supervisory and management staff. These meetings are intended to improve relationships/partnerships, help identify local needs of our common clients and provide a cooperative base from which to move forward to achieve common goals. These meetings will remain a priority and an ongoing feature of the AZRSA's current administration.

Local AZRSA staff have been asked to follow-up these meetings with a survey of providers which include the following elements:

*What are the top five service needs and the least important five services for your clients (with a breakdown by disability) from the following list?*

- *Comprehensive disability skills training.*
- *Youth transition services.*
- *Assistive technology equipment and service needs.*
- *Benefits planning.*
- *Housing.*
- *Prevocational services (development of soft skills).*
- *Social work services, case management.*
- *Comprehensive assessments (medical, speech, AT).*
- *Life planning.*
- *Post employment skill building (how do we retain a job?).*

*Are these services for individual clients or are these best approached as services to groups (innovation and development) projects?*

*What restricts your clients from receiving, seeking, and completing services?*

*What are the unmet needs? Gaps in services? Is your program able to meet the unmet need or to close the gap?*

*What are your ideas for outreach or marketing the VR program?*

### **Partners in building and maintaining a network of services and programs**

As a result of earlier needs assessments, the AZRSA awarded services to groups contracts for the establishment, development, and improvement of programs and services to 35 qualifying CRPs and agencies three years ago. The requests for proposals were as follows:

#### *1.1.1 Projects to develop coordinated transportation resources for VR clients needing to get back and forth to training or employment.*

*Goal #1: The purpose of these projects is primarily to develop methods or systems to coordinate and maximize the use of existing transportation resources, but may include the purchase of vehicles.*

#### *1.1.2 Projects benefiting behavioral health consumers who are applicants or participants of the Vocational Rehabilitation directed at one or more of the following goals.*

*Goal #1: To develop and expand partnerships with business/industries (including National Industries for the Severely Handicapped-NISH) that will result in training and integrated employment opportunities (or direct placements) in specified employment sectors.*

*Goal #2: To develop a consumer-run retail, service or manufacturing business.*  
*A consumer-run business must be primarily run by consumers. The consumer-run operation may be part of a larger agency/business that provides training, technical and administrative support and assistance to the consumer-run organization or be assisted by the non-profit or public agency.*

*Goal #3: To assist individuals with Serious Mental Illnesses (SMI) to work in entry-level professional positions.*  
*The AZRSA envisions such positions to include, but not be limited to: job coaches, job developers, case managers and/or eligibility workers. Assistance could include: educational counseling; provision of preparatory training/education; supported education services while individuals are in training/education; identification of employment opportunities and recruitment of individuals with SMI for such jobs; provision of intensive supports to individuals with SMI and to the agencies who hire them.*

*Goal #4: To develop a training program for employees of public agencies such as fire or police departments on how to work effectively and correctly with persons with SMI in crisis situations (where such training may not be currently available or such cooperation doesn't currently exist), to deliver such training, and to create ongoing links between fire and police departments and local agencies serving persons with SMI.*

*The AZRSA envisions local community rehabilitation providers in Arizona assessing local needs, obtaining commitments from participating organizations, developing a training program, providing this training, and creating ongoing links between local Community Rehabilitation Program providers, RBHA agencies, Vocational Rehabilitation program staff and local police and fire department personnel. A major cause for loss of jobs*

*by persons with severe mental illnesses is entanglements with law enforcement personnel. A greater sensitivity to the needs of persons with SMI and a greater cooperation between agencies that serve this population can reap benefits for all and save many jobs for VR clients after they are employed.*

*1.1.3 Projects to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities with community employers directed at one or both of the following goals:*

*Goal # 1: To coordinate resources available to community employers in the recruitment, hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities.*

*The AZRSA envisions one or more project(s) to coordinate community employers' access to methods and resources: (a) to identify, recruit, hire and retain in employment persons with significant disabilities; (b) to help them to make employment environments accessible to persons with disabilities; and (c) to train/educate managers, supervisors and fellow employees on disability and disability issues on behalf of, and working with, the "Employment Disability Resources Network" (a consortium comprised of the AZRSA/VR, the AZ Job Service, Community Rehabilitation Program providers, the AZ Business Leadership Network and the State Rehabilitation Council).*

*Goal #2: To provide a forum for regular interaction between AZRSA management and community employers.*

*AZRSA envisions these projects as developing an ongoing mechanism to develop, coordinate and manage regular and meaningful interactions between AZRSA decision makers and community employers.*

*1.1.4 Projects benefiting persons who are blind or visually-impaired directed at one or more of the following goals.*

*Goal #1: To develop, expand, or improve a comprehensive adjustment services program for transition high school students who are blind or visually-impaired to include:*

- Rehabilitation instructional services*
- Adjustment to disability*
- Assistive technology services/equipment*
- College preparation*

*The AZRSA envisions that services provided through such a program will result in a seamless transition from high school to Vocational Rehabilitation. Rehabilitation instructional services, adjustment to disability, assistive technology services and college preparation (where appropriate), when provided in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, will expedite a student's progress towards achieving economic self-sufficiency through work.*

*These services should result in having the necessary adaptive skills and the self confidence to be successful in employment or in post-secondary education/skill training.*

*The services under this goal could be combined with those under Goal #3, vocational readiness, work exploration, and trial employment program, to make an even more comprehensive service delivery system.*

- Goal #2:** *To develop, expand, or improve a comprehensive adjustment service program for adults who are blind or visually-impaired to include:*
- Rehabilitation instructional services;*
  - Adjustment to disability; and*
  - Assistive technology services/equipment.*

*The AZRSA envisions that when rehabilitation instructional services, adjustment to disability, and assistive technology services are provided in a coordinated and efficient manner, clients will complete these services in a much shorter period of time. This will in turn expedite the client's achievement of his/her vocational goal.*

*In some instances where these services are available already, this might be achieved by adding just a coordination function that would allow clients to receive all services in a coordinated manner. In other instances, an agency might have to add one or more services to develop the necessary service array, as well as adding a coordination function.*

*The services under this goal could be combined with services under Goal #3, vocational readiness, work exploration, and trial employment program, to make an even more comprehensive service delivery system.*

- Goal #3:** *To develop, expand, or improve a vocational readiness, work exploration, trial employment, specific job training program designed specifically for adults and/or transition students who are blind or visually impaired.*

*The AZRSA envisions that one or more of the following services will be combined to provide a comprehensive career exploration program: assessments to determine aptitude, interests and abilities; career exploration activities, including job shadowing and work experience; vocational guidance and counseling; instruction in conducting labor market surveys, completing applications, developing a resume, interviewing skills, trial employment and specific job training. This could include placement into competitive employment.*

*The services under this goal could be combined with the Goals #1 and #2, which deal with comprehensive adjustment services.*

- 1.1.5** *Projects to make One Stop Workforce Development Centers a viable and significant resource for persons with disabilities. Projects that will be considered for funding include, but are not limited to:*

- Goal #1:** *Hiring and training disability specialists/coordinators to work within One Stop Workforce Development Centers.*

- Goal #2:** *Creating and supporting a cross-disability resource center/program (e.g. self-help peer support groups, disability benefits counseling, management of IRWEs, PASS plans, a staffed resource center, etc.) for persons with*

*disabilities within the One Stop center.*

*Goal #3: Creating and/or supporting transportation resources to make One Stop services available to persons with disabilities who have transportation needs.*

*1.1.6 Programs to create an ongoing resource to AZRSA counselors in the area of rehabilitation technology for clients of the VR program within each region of the state (applicants who intend to serve individuals who are blind should consider applying under paragraph 1.1.4). Staff hired under such programs will, in part, act as a partner to the VR counselor in planning and providing assistive technology to clients. Projects will include a package of services to include:*

*1.1.6.1 Developing, maintaining, and providing general resource information for easy access by counselors and VR clients;*

*1.1.6.2 "General" (see definition below) rehabilitation technology assessments;*

*1.1.6.3 Technical assistance (both general and on specific client issues);*

*1.1.6.4 Development, coordination and convening teams of experts, as necessary, to solve specific client issues; and/or*

*1.1.6.5 Referrals to appropriate vendors (within the full range of rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology services, and assistive technology devices) to implement rehabilitation technology plans.*

*("General" rehabilitation technology assessments are at a level sufficient to understand the problem and the issues involved. These assessments must be thorough enough to make recommendations to the VR counselor, but they are not at a level of thoroughness necessary for providing or leading to a prescription - supplemental evaluations from community providers in specific areas would be recommended and used for such evaluations.)*

*1.1.7 Programs to update and improve the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) to allow them to provide quality services and to compete for state set-aside projects. Programs that will be considered for funding include, but are not limited to:*

*Goal #1: Expansion of current programs to include work activities or work exposure in areas such as clerical, secretarial, customer service, janitorial, etc.*

*1.1.8 Program to develop a system of supports for juveniles who are in the juvenile correction or probation system and clients of the VR program which would increase their chances of successfully completing a program of VR services and maintain employment.*

*Goal #1 Development of a program of social work and counseling supports and intervention strategies to increase the odds of youths who have been referred to the VR program and who are participating in an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to complete high school, prevent recidivism back to jail or detention, and to keep a job until age nineteen (19).*

*1.1.9 Programs to improve, modify and enhance the delivery of services to persons with disabilities who are also TANF recipients.*

*Goal #1      Development of programs by community rehabilitation program providers or other governmental agencies which provide employment readiness, training and/or placement services to TANF recipients who have disabilities in partnership with DES/AZRSA.*

The projects which were funded have created a greater variety of job placement opportunities for VR clients, developed training and adjustment programs for special populations, and provided technical assistance for the AZRSA staff. Although some of these projects have been completed, the AZRSA is in the last year of continued funding for sixteen (16) of these projects.

A continuing need for such services to groups projects, especially in a state as diverse and expanding as Arizona, exists. Many of the areas for which projects were requested three years ago continue to be needs. The current surveys being conducted now will help us determine other emerging needs as well. AZRSA plans to award such projects in the coming year. AZRSA has also used such innovation and expansion projects to support community rehabilitation service providers to obtain Federal Javitt's Wagner O'Day (JWOD) contracts.

### **Contracting**

AZRSA has contracts with over 150 private, non-profit community rehabilitation program providers in the state. Many of these contracts are for traditional job development and placement, work adjustment training, and supported employment services.

The AZRSA is initiating a pilot project to change the way it purchases job development and placement, work adjustment training, and supported employment services. This coming year, the AZRSA will be initiating performance-based contracting for these services on a pilot basis.